



# Talking Points

---



Department of Housing and  
Community Development

501 North Second Street

Richmond, VA 23219

Phone (804) 371-7030

Fax (804) 371-7093

E-mail: [mainstreet@dhcd.virginia.gov](mailto:mainstreet@dhcd.virginia.gov)

[www.dhcd.virginia.gov/mainstreet](http://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/mainstreet)

## National Background

- Purpose is to help localities reverse economic and physical decline in traditional downtown and neighborhood business districts
- Developed by National Trust for Historic Preservation in the 1970s to save downtown districts from economic decline and physical demolition
  - Piloted in 3 communities in 3 Midwestern states
  - Success of program led to formation of National Main Street Center in 1980s (relationship with states is contractual)
  - Celebrating 25 years of Main Street in 2005
- While the Trust was interested in saving buildings, they knew they could only do so by saving their purpose or creating a new purpose -- economic development in the context of historic preservation
- Strategy is ***Four Point Main Street Approach***<sup>TM</sup> based on:
  - **Organization**—building broad-based partnerships to manage the revitalization effort
  - **Promotion**—creating and marketing a positive image for downtown
  - **Design**—improving the physical environment of downtown
  - **Economic Restructuring**—strengthening and expanding downtown's existing economic assets
- Now implemented in more than 1,800 communities in 40 states, plus neighborhood programs in Boston, San Diego, Baltimore and Washington D.C.
- More than \$18 billion of public and private investment nationwide to date in Main Street communities.

Additional information  
is available on the  
National Main Street  
Center website at  
[www.mainstreet.org](http://www.mainstreet.org)  
or call (202) 588-6219.

## *Virginia Main Street Talking Points*

### **State Background**

- Program is housed in the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development. Visit our website at :  
[www.dhcd.virginia.gov/mainstreet](http://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/mainstreet)
- Virginia Main Street was 15<sup>th</sup> state to become part of program (1985)
  - Currently 20 designated Main Street communities in Virginia
  - Communities are competitively selected
  - There are also 50 DHCD Commercial District Affiliates selected in a noncompetitive process
- Main Street program state staff provide: training, technical assistance, networking opportunities, access to state and national experts, customized design assistance and ongoing public relations and marketing
- Economic impact statistics from program inception in 1985 through year-end 2004:
  - \$299 million of private investment in building rehabilitations
  - 4,501 building rehabilitation projects
  - 3,499 new, expanded or retained businesses
  - 9,647 new jobs
  - 254,067 volunteer hours (1997-2004), valued at \$4.4 million

### **Virginia Main Street Communities**

**Bedford** (1985)  
**Berryville** (1992)  
**Culpeper** (1988)  
**Danville** (2000)  
**Franklin** (1985)  
**Harrisonburg** (2004)  
**Lexington** (1988)  
**Luray** (2004)  
**Lynchburg** (2000)  
**Manassas** (1988)  
**Marion** (1995)  
**Martinsville** (1995)  
**Orange** (1992)  
**Radford** (1989)  
**Rocky Mount** (1995)  
**South Boston** (2004)  
**Staunton** (1995)  
**Warrenton** (1989)  
**Waynesboro** (2000)  
**Winchester** (1985)

### **Economic Benefits of Downtown**

- Older buildings have unique and irreplaceable historic architecture
- Downtown is often the community's largest employment center and a significant contributor to the local tax base
- Revitalization encourages economic growth in an area of the community already served by infrastructure
- Downtown businesses tend to be locally owned and thus give much more back to the community economically
- For every \$1 spent in the community, downtown merchants return 60 cents; chain stores return only 20 cents and big box discounters return only 6 cents
- For every 1,000 square feet of retail space downtown merchants generate an annual net surplus of \$326, while big-box stores creates an annual tax deficit of \$468.
- Renovating downtown commercial storefronts has been shown in four different statewide studies to result in long-term increase in sales; also employ local contractors using locally purchased materials
- With new construction 50 percent of cost is labor and 50 percent materials; with rehabilitation 70 percent is labor (usually local) and 30 percent materials

### **Downtown Investment Pays Off**

- For the **residents**.... more jobs, goods, services and housing
- For the **business person**.... more customers & sales
- For the **visitor**...more reasons to visit, spend more & stay longer
- For **elected officials & city leaders**... increased real property & sales tax revenue, industrial recruitment

### **Community Involvement**

- Main Street works through public/private partnerships at the local level, making best use of the skills and abilities of the government and nonprofit sectors, working cooperatively with private businesses and individuals
- The program works in Virginia because communities use local initiative and resources to develop revitalization strategies following the Main Street Approach™
- The state program provides guidance and expertise in support of local efforts
- Use of volunteers is cost effective and ensures that residents have a say in downtown's development and a commitment to make it work (Volunteer time is valued at \$17.19 per hour.)

### **There's No Place Like Downtown!**

- We need to preserve the distinctive architecture of downtown because it defines what makes each community unique – giving it a "sense of place" and identity
- Economic revitalization provides jobs and business ownership opportunities for local residents, particularly youth who may otherwise leave the community in search of employment
- Renewed vitality enhances community "quality of life"... more cultural and recreational opportunities, better schools, better libraries, more housing options – all in a setting of heritage preserved
- Downtown is “everyone’s neighborhood” – open and inclusive